IN THE CLAIMS

This **Listing of Claims** will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) An ossicle prosthesis (10; 20), which replaces or spans at least one member of a ~~the~~ human ossicle chain, in which the ossicle prosthesis (10; 20) includes ~~, on both of its ends, has~~ a first securing element (11) on one end and a second securing element (12; 22) on its other end, the second securing element adapted for mechanical connection to a member of the ossicle chain, to the eardrum or to the inner ear, wherein ~~and~~ between the two securing elements (11, 12; 22) is ~~has~~ a ball joint, which includes two struts (13, 13') that ~~, which~~ are solidly joined to the first securing element (11), and extend parallel or at an angle to one another enclosing ~~, and between them enclose~~ a gaplike space[[,]] in which a ball (14) is pivotably supported in two recesses (15) in the struts (13, 13'), and which ~~the~~ ball (14) is part of an elongated shaft (16) that ~~which~~ connects the two securing elements (11, 12; 22) to one another,

wherein ~~characterized in that~~

the elongated shaft (16) further includes many balls (14, 14', 14") adjoining one another, of which one is the ball (14) in the ball joint, and ~~;~~

~~the elongated shaft (16)~~ is displaceable through the gaplike space between the two struts (13, 13') of the ball joint, in a direction perpendicular to the struts (13, 13') extending towards ~~and toward~~ or away from the first securing element (11), ~~and~~ through a perforation (17) in the first securing element (11), wherein ~~and~~ one each of the balls (14, 14', 14") snaps in a snapped-in position between the recesses (15) of the struts (13, 13'), so that a desired length of the shaft (16) modulus ~~module~~ adjusts the spacing of the balls (14, 14', 14") from one another,

and the part of the shaft (16) protruding through and past the first securing element (11) can be cut to length;

and wherein the gaplike space between the two struts (13, 13') of the ball joint can be made narrower for fixation of the shaft (16) after the desired length has been adjusted.

2. (currently amended) The ossicle prosthesis as defined by claim 1, wherein ~~characterized in that~~ the two struts (13, 13') of the ball joint are embodied integrally with the first securing element (11).

3. (currently amended) The ossicle prosthesis as defined by claim 1, wherein ~~characterized in that~~ each of the two struts (13, 13') of the ball joint has at least one recess ~~and preferably plurality of recesses (15, 15'), located side by side,~~ for receiving a ball (14) of the elongated shaft (16)~~, and two recesses (15 and 15', respectively) of the two struts (13, 13') are always diametrically opposite one another~~.

4. (currently amended) The ossicle prosthesis as defined by claim 3, wherein ~~characterized in that~~ the recesses (15, 15') have the shape of round holes.

5. (currently amended) The ossicle prosthesis as defined by claim 1, wherein ~~characterized in that~~ each of the two struts of the ball joint has at least one oblong-slot-shaped recess for receiving a ball (14) of the elongated shaft (16) displaceably in the longitudinal direction of the oblong hole, and wherein two recesses of the two struts are arranged ~~always~~ diametrically opposite one another.

6. (currently amended) The ossicle prosthesis as defined by claim 1, wherein ~~characterized in that~~ the balls (14, 14', 14") of the elongated shaft (16) each have the same outer diameter and are located equidistantly along the axis of the shaft (16).

7. (currently amended) The ossicle prosthesis as defined by claim 1, wherein ~~characterized in that~~ the elongated shaft (16) includes a rod element, and wherein ~~onto which~~ balls (14, 14', 14") are provided with through bores through which they are slipped and then fixed on the rod element ~~are slipped~~.

8. (currently amended) The ossicle prosthesis as defined by claim 6, wherein ~~characterized in that~~ the elongated shaft (16) includes a rod element, and wherein ~~onto which~~ balls (14, 14', 14") are provided with through bores through which they are slipped and then fixed on the rod element ~~are slipped~~.

9. (currently amended) The ossicle prosthesis as defined by claim 7, wherein ~~characterized in that~~ the balls (14, 14', 14") are welded to the rod element~~, preferably by means of laser welding~~.

10. (currently amended) The ossicle prosthesis as defined by claim 7, wherein ~~characterized in that~~ the through bores of the balls (14, 14', 14") are produced by means of lasers.

11. (currently amended) The ossicle prosthesis as defined by claim 7, wherein ~~characterized in that~~ the rod element is made from a flexible material.

12. (currently amended) The ossicle prosthesis as defined by claim 1, wherein ~~characterized in that~~ the securing elements (11, 12; 22) are embodied in

forms selected from a group consisting of: plate-shaped, bell-shaped ram-shaped and ~~plate-, bell-, or ram-shaped form or as a~~ clip.

13. (currently amended) The ossicle prosthesis as defined by claim 1, wherein ~~characterized in that~~ the first securing element (11) includes a head plate embodied for contact with the eardrum.

14. (cancelled)

15. (currently amended) The ossicle prosthesis as defined by claim 1, wherein ~~characterized in that~~ the prosthesis or parts thereof are made from material selected from a group consisting of: titanium, ~~and/or~~ gold, ~~and/or~~ tantalum, titanium alloy, gold alloy and tantalum alloy~~and/or an alloy of these metals~~.

16. (cancelled)

17. (cancelled)

18. (cancelled)

19. (cancelled).

20. (cancelled)

21. (new) The ossicle prosthesis as defined by claim 1, wherein each of the two struts (13, 13') of the ball joint has a plurality of recesses (15, 15') that located side by side for receiving a ball (14) of the elongated shaft (16), and

wherein two of the plurality of recesses (15 and 15') are arranged diametrically opposite one another.

22. (new) The ossicle prosthesis as defined by claim 9, wherein balls (14, 14', 14") are welded to the rod element by means of laser welding.